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Editors Note: *The following article was submitted for publication by Asta Mønsted who was born and raised in Uummannaq, Greenland. Currently she is studying for her Master's degree in Prehistoric Archaeology at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark. She also works as a guide in the Arctic collection at the National Museum of Denmark.*

The Arctic drum – a drum beat is heard coming from Greenland

By Asta Mønsted



The drum has a special place in the heart of the Arctic people. The Arctic drum is namely much more than just a musical instrument. The drum has been strongly connected with shamanism, but was also used by villagers for entertainment purposes (i.e. drum songs) and judicial decisions. The Arctic drum is deeply rooted in the Inuit culture and, archaeologically, it can be traced back to some of the earliest Arctic societies. Geographically, the traces of the Arctic drum are wide spread starting in Eastern Siberia crossing the Bering Sea to Alaska and further into Northern Canada and ending up on the island of Greenland. These deep and extensive roots connected the Inuit people of the past – as they do today. Our

culture and cultural remains originate from the same source and, therefore, an archaeological project concerning Arctic drum fragments in Greenland is considered relevant to readers of an Alaskan newsletter. Now that it's dark and cold outside, I will do as the traditional Inuit's did during this time of year: I will tell you a story. It's an old story of the arctic drum – but with a modern twist.



Following the traces of the drum

During the cold and dark month of January 2013, my ongoing interest in the Arctic drum started and I realized that I had found the subject for my upcoming bachelors dissertation. As I started to unravel the ancient story of the Arctic drum through the use of ethnographic documentation, I realized that these drum fragments could be traced back in time to the Thule culture (approx. 1200-1900 AD), the Dorset culture (approx. 650-1200 AD) and even further into the Saqqaq culture (approx. 2500-800 BC), which, in Greenland, are some of the earliest people to inhabit the island – around 4500 years ago. Nonetheless, a question which kept haunting me was how these drum fragments could be recognized without the recovery of a complete drum? The Arctic soil has some of the world's best conditions for artefact preservation of organic materials, which the museum collections are solid proof of. But even so, archaeologists rarely excavate complete drums which were generally made from animal remains (i.e. bone, antler, skin and internal organs).

The drum's “fingerprint”

During the next couple of months I sat at the National Museum of Denmark studying artefacts excavated in Greenland, by the Danish Arctic archaeologist Therkel Mathiassen in 1933. The artefacts had all been labelled as ‘drum fragments’, and so I tried to figure out why. Based on my analysis, I created a thesis which outlined how to recognize a drum frame and a drum handle, respectively. The drum frame needs a groove on the outside of the frame in order to tie down the drum skin. In the meantime, the drum handle is in need of a slot for it to be latched onto the drum frame (*See picture below*).



Unfortunately, other parts of the Arctic drum are very difficult to recognize during excavation. Take the drum skin for example; this part was primarily made of the spleen, bladder or skin of a walrus or other large seals. These materials are the most likely to decay, and if the drum skin had been removed from the frame, then it is even more difficult to argue, that it was a drum skin and not part of some other artefact. Speaking



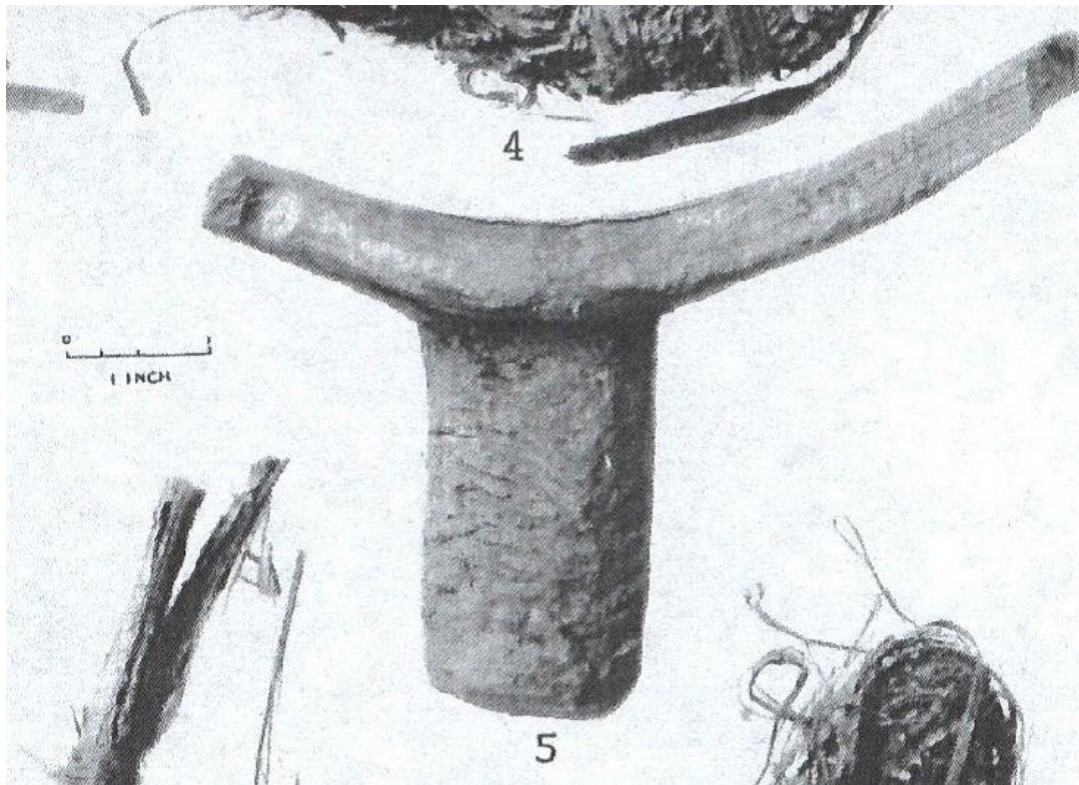
of drum skins, I have realized that the Alaska State Museum houses some gorgeous historic drums, where the skins have been painted in beautiful colours and motives! If you have not been to see them yet, you ought to. Sadly, I have not stumbled upon any painted drum skins during my studies of the Greenlandic drum materials, but your decorated drum skins tell me that I should not rule out this idea. The origin of the drum Since the Arctic drum was introduced to Greenland from the western part of the

Arctic, I wanted to test out whether or not these two Greenlandic drum characteristics (i.e. the groove and slot) could be transferred to drums from respectively; Canada, Alaska and Siberia.



During this investigation I concluded, that the Arctic drum came in various shapes, sizes and construction forms. With the help of Ellen Carrlee, the conservator at Alaska State Museum, I realized that some drums could e.g. hold the drum skin by sandwiching it between two drum frames – and thereby avoid the groove on the drum frame. An example from St. Lawrence, Alaska shows that the drum handle could also be carved on

the side of the drum frame, and therefore did not need a slot to connect the two pieces (see picture below).



An example from Birnirk, Alaska shows another way of avoiding the slot on the drum handle, since; in this case, the handle was inserted through a hole on the side of the drum frame (Picture below).

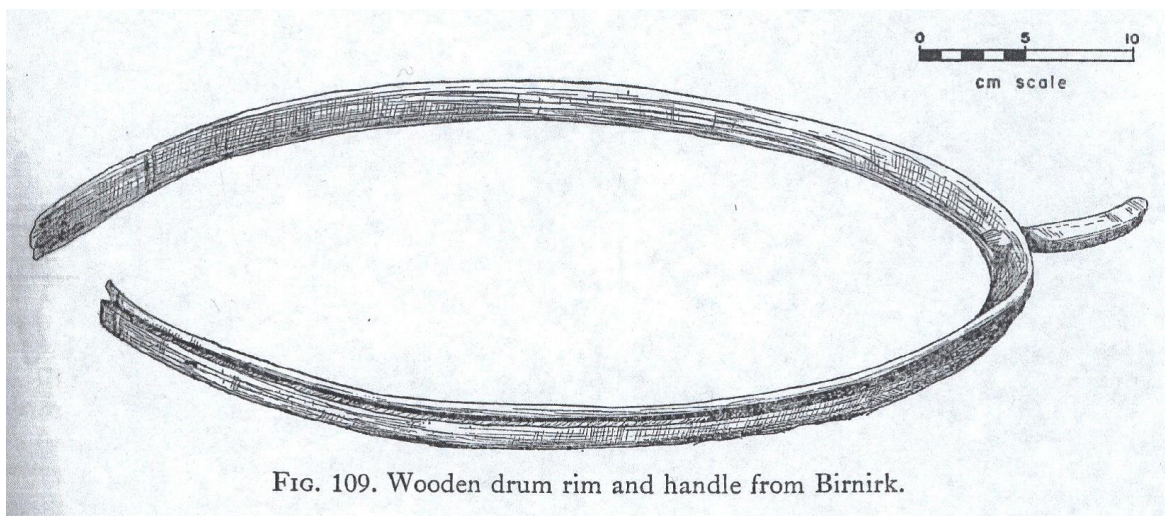
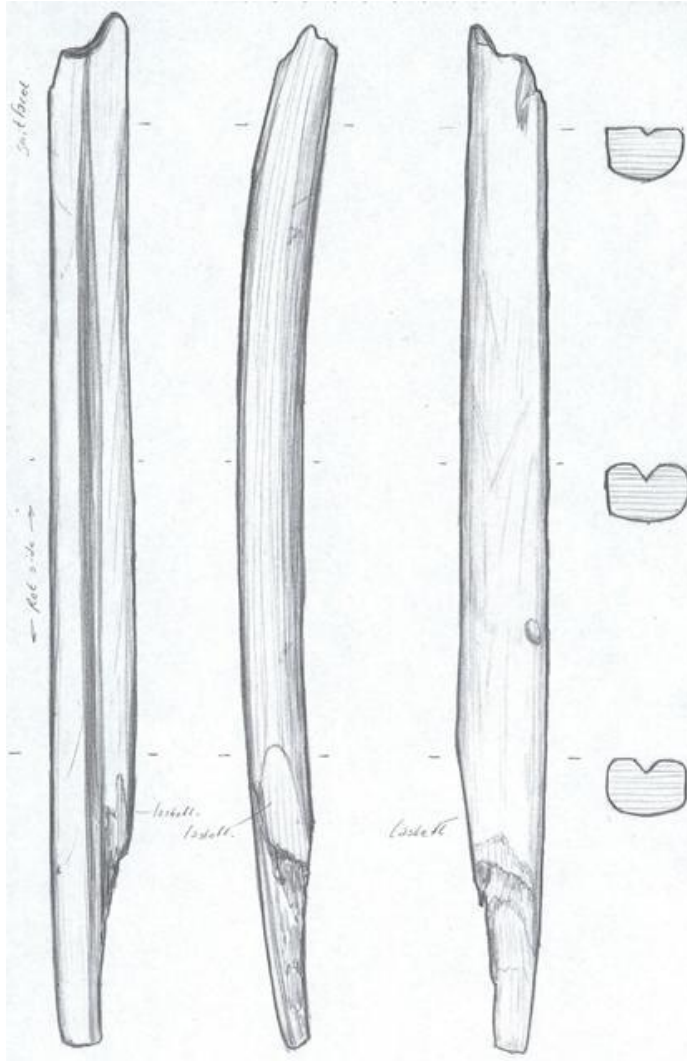


FIG. 109. Wooden drum rim and handle from Birnirk.

Another interesting observation was done, when I examined the oldest dated drum fragments from Greenland. Two pieces of a drum rim were excavated at Qajaa and Qeqertasussuk, respectively, which revealed similarities, not to other Greenlandic drums, but to Alaskan drums (*see picture below*).



Both drum rims were thicker than observed on other Greenlandic drums, while the curve of the rim fragments indicated a full rim diameter between 60-75 centimetres. So while the average drum rim in Greenland is approx. 30-40 centimetres in diameter, these older drum parts appear to have a stronger connection to the drums from where the Inuit culture originated – the western part of the Arctic. This may not be so surprising, but nevertheless, it is interesting since it shows how deeply connected the Inuit cultures were nearly 4.500 years ago, when the first Inuit people coming from the West set foot on new land; Greenland. Being nomadic in nature, they brought all of their belongings with them – among them the iconic drum; and some of these drum fragments ended up in my hands for analysis! What a journey. This is the end of my part of the story. Now someone else might pick up from where I left, in an attempt to figure

out whether or not one can also establish characteristic traits in drum fragments from archaeological materials found in Alaska. As an old shaman said: *“The only thing we know for certain, is that what shall happen, will happen”*. Thank you for listening to a fellow 'inuk'.



Ask ASM



Question: Recently a pair of Made in the USA XtraTuf rubber boots were donated to the museum. They are covered in fish scales. I don't want to remove the scales, since they are critical to the history and convey the use of the boots, plus the scales are visually compelling. Yet, I am concerned that they may attract pests. What is your inclination- remove or keep the scales?

I would like to feature the boots in a permanent exhibit about local commercial fisheries, yet the exhibit will not be mounted for several years. Do you have any suggestions about storage mounts or materials while the boots are not on exhibit? Are there any conservation

concerns that I should be aware of for when they are exhibited?

ASM: That is a really interesting artifact and so iconic to Alaska. I can see why you would want to put it in the exhibit. First off you should know that anything made of rubber or neoprene is really hard to preserve. It has what we call “inherent vice.” Which is just a fancy way of saying it is going to fall apart on its own no matter what we do. We can slow down the deterioration but we can’t completely halt it. The clock is ticking. Other artifacts with inherent vice are nitrate negatives. When an institution has a large, important collection of nitrate film, they sometimes put them in cold storage, like a refrigerator or an entire cold vault. In your case that might be difficult to achieve, especially during the time you put it on exhibit. And the cold might cause some dimensional change (shrinkage) which could cause the fish scales to pop off. So we have to take all the materials into consideration and also balance preservation with the resources that are available. I would recommend that for short term you photograph and document the present condition in a very thorough manner. For storage, you could gently wrap each boot in several layers of acid-free buffered tissue paper. The buffering agents in the tissue paper will help absorb the off-gassing that will occur as the rubber breaks down. These are generally sulfur products that result from the breakdown of the organic components in the rubber. If they are absorbed they tend to get somewhat neutralized and are less likely to cause the rubber to break down further.

As for the exhibit end of things, that is really tricky. The scales are being held on by fish slime I assume. That is interesting. Fish glue has been used as an adhesive for centuries but sticking anything to rubber can be a challenge. So it might only be a matter of time before they start to fall off. I would really limit the handling of them in the first place. It would be best if they could be in their own exhibit case or even a case within a case. There are VOC scavengers that you can line the case with. It is a kind of paper or cloth that has activated charcoal in it which absorbs the VOC’s. Make sure the boots have low light levels on them and the RH is stable. All of these things will contribute to preserving these.

There is also a whole discussion we could have about whether to accession items like these into the permanent collection or to just consider them exhibit props. But maybe we should save that for another time.

Shaking the Money Tree

Heritage Preservation

CAP Applications Available

Heritage Preservation is pleased to announce that the 2014 Conservation Assessment Program application are available at:

<http://www.heritagepreservation.org/CAP/index.html>. Paper applications are available upon request.

Applications must be postmarked, submitted online, or emailed no later than 11:59 p.m. on Friday, February 14th. We encourage museums to apply as soon after the application release as possible, as we always receive more applicants than we are able to fund.

Questions may be directed to CAP staff at cap@heritagepreservation.org, or 202-233-0800.

IMLS

Sparks! Ignition Grants for Libraries. The application deadline is February 3, 2014.

Sparks! Ignition Grants for Libraries are small grants that encourage libraries and archives to prototype and evaluate innovations that result in new tools, products, services, or organizational practices. They enable grantees to undertake activities that involve risk and require them to share project results—whether they succeed or fail—to provide valuable information to the library field and help improve the ways libraries serve their communities.

The funding range is from \$10,000 to \$25,000, and there are no matching requirements. Projects must begin on October 1, November 1, or December 1, 2014. Click [here](#) for program guidelines and more information about the funding opportunity.

Spotlight on Grant in Aid



The Juneau-Douglas City Museum's Education Collection Re-Organization Project assisted the Museum in completing its first thorough education collection inventory.

This grant provided funding to hire a contractor to accession the education collection into PastPerfect and for improved storage solutions for the education collection. The ability to purchase storage lockers, flat file drawers, and storage carts enabled the collection to be housed more efficiently in the same area of the basement where all education collection items are in one location.

Storage for education clothing before the project



Storage for education clothing after project.

Furniture not accessioned into the collection used for education hands-on rooms or exhibit props is still housed in an off-site storage location. Funding enabled the purchase of archival boxes for the collections so that items can be stored with care, such as hat boxes for the hats so they are not crushed, and compartment trays for antique jewelry, light bulbs, collection shells, etc.





The contractor completed 100 hours of work and 550 new scans with associated data entry on 467 education items into PastPerfect. This project allowed the culling of items that were broken, worn, or not preferred for hands on use. Some items culled were old-fashioned clothing that was torn or worn and hats that were no longer in good repair from the dress-up closet. Old/antique books were culled and discarded which were not suitable for the hands-on room because of the content or the condition of the book. Other items that were culled were mining implements that were rusty or sharp, bits of glass and beach-combing that has been put on the education shelf, but never inventoried, and toys that were broken from use in previous hands-on rooms.

With the education collection now in PastPerfect, Museum staff can search the collection for specific requests and with the goal of the future creation of education kits that can be loaned out to teachers for use in the classroom. Weaknesses within the collection related to education kit goals and teacher requests can be identified and filling these gaps can begin. The grant project enabled them to create postcards to be delivered to the schools announcing our education collection to teachers to take a look at, become excited about, and think about how items can fit into their classroom. An added bonus, with more efficient storage we have gleaned more space at our offsite storage facility.

Alaska Museums in the News

Discovery of a rare Tlingit War Helmet causes media stir

<http://www.alaskadispatch.com/article/20131218/rare-tingit-war-helmet-discovered-massachusetts-museum-archives>

<http://www.springfieldmuseums.org/news/view/762-a-hidden-treasure-revealed-rare-tingit-war-helmet-discovered-at-springfield-science-museum>

<http://www.masslive.com/news/index.ssf/2013/12/rare-tingit-war-helmet-discov.html>

<http://www.wggb.com/2013/12/18/a-hidden-treasure-revealed/>

<https://www.alaskadispatch.com/article/20140107/emergence-rare-tingit-war-helmet-raises-chorus-homecoming>

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Professional Development/Training Opportunities

PastPerfect Training

Cataloging Collections with PastPerfect 5.0

February 11-13 | 10:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. ET (7:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. PT)

Cataloging Collections with PastPerfect 5.0 demonstrates how using PastPerfect can speed up your data entry process. In this three-day course, our trainers will demonstrate how to use authority files, attach digital images, keep your data safe, and much more. With a focus on efficiency, this class will walk step by step through the accession process from the moment "a man walks in with a box." New users of PastPerfect will learn recommended methods for consistent collections data entry; experienced users will pick up tips to maximize their use of the program. Registered participants will be sent a free copy of the *Cataloging Collections with PastPerfect 5.0* Training CD, which complements this course.

Researching and Reporting with PastPerfect 5.0

March 18-19 | 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. ET (7:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. PT)

Research and Reporting with PastPerfect 5.0 is a two-day course that demonstrates how researching and reporting on your collections, donations and membership dues in PastPerfect is straightforward and effective. This course reviews PastPerfect's research options, highlights commonly-used reports from PastPerfect's 300+ built-in reports, and teaches easy-to-use tools to modify existing reports and create your own reports using Report Maker. Registered participants will receive a free copy of the *Research and Reporting with PastPerfect 5.0* Training CD, which complements this course.

Costs: \$69 per person,
Course descriptions as well as additional training options can be found at our [website](#).

Jennessa Reed, Training Coordinator

PastPerfect Software, Inc.

Training@museumsoftware.com

1-800-562-6080

CONSULTING ARCHIVIST PROGRAM

The Alaska State Historical Records Advisory Board (ASHRAB) has initiated a program to provide hands-on consultation to six small field archives across Alaska. Experienced archivists from the Sealaska Heritage Institute, University of Alaska Anchorage Archives & Special Collections, University of Alaska Fairbanks Alaska & Polar Regions Collections, and Alaska State Archives will conduct preliminary work and travel to rural locations between mid-February and May to selected institutions to make best-practices recommendations at no cost to the field institution.

The program, sponsored by the ASHRAB and the National Historical Publications & Records Commission, will provide three days on-site consultation about archival policies, procedures, and confidentiality of materials. The visiting archivist will address appraisal, description, arrangement, conservation needs, access, and security of archival documents. The archivist will provide training to assist staff in managing and preserving unique, irreplaceable materials.

Those interested in participating in the program must complete an application questionnaire by January 30, 2014. ASHRAB will select the institutions to receive assistance in mid-February.

For an application questionnaire or more information, contact State Archivist Dean Dawson at dean.dawson@alaska.gov.

Poles, Posts and Canoes: the Preservation, Conservation and Continuation of Native American Monumental Wood Carving.

July 21st – 22nd, 2014, Hibulb Cultural Center and Natural History Preserve, Tulalip, Washington (Opening Ceremony and Dinner, July 20th, 2014)

This two day symposium (preceded by an opening ceremony and meal on the evening of July 20th) will gather Native and non-Native museum professionals, tribal members, and contemporary Native carvers to discuss the challenges of preserving and exhibiting historic monumental wood carvings from both a Native and Non-Native view point. It will also serve to connect Native carvers and the museum community in the hope that the resulting dialogue will help support the continued development of this traditional art form. The format of this gathering is aimed at encouraging discussion, so presentations will be relaxed and brief, and an equal amount of time will be scheduled for general discussion of the topics addressed.

Registration will open January 21st, 2014, and a provisional program will be available at that time.

Further information and details about the conference will be posted at www.hibulbculturalcenter.org/Events/Symposium/

Call for papers:

The meeting is heavily focused on inclusive discussions amongst participants; therefore we are seeking short presentations (10 – 15 minutes maximum) that encourage constructive dialog. While technical papers are welcome, we ask that presenters keep in mind the broad background of the expected attendees. The event will be recorded and the proceedings published.

Proposals for presentations on the following topics are invited:

- The history behind the past care of poles, posts, canoes and similar large Native carvings held in conventional museum settings.
- The care of these objects in Native museums and communities from the Native perspective.
- What types of large artifact conservation treatments and care work best in Native and non-Native museums?
- The importance and relevance of these objects for the personal visions of the Native carver.
- The potential use of traditional methods and materials in the preservation of existing objects in collections.
- How can conservators, custodians and Native carvers bridge the communication gap and support each other's work?
- How can a balance be struck between technical and non-technical methodologies?
- How can we define a range of "best practices" in Native museum collections regarding treatments, storage, moving and mounting techniques for this material?

Information to be included in your proposal:

- Presentation proposal should be not more than 250 words.
- Please include a 100 word summary that will be included on the conference website, should your paper be accepted.
- Provide your name, occupation/institution and contact information, including e-mail address.
- Indicate the format of your presentation – PowerPoint, presentation from written notes, etc.

Deadline for submission: February 3rd, 2014.

Please submit proposals to: J. Claire Dean
at info@hibulbculturalcenter.org (include “PPC paper proposal” in the subject line).

You will be notified by e-mail whether or not your paper has been accepted by February 28th, 2014.

Professional Time Wasting on the Web

Darn Cats!

http://io9.com/this-medieval-manuscript-curses-the-cat-who-peed-on-it-1502884468?utm_campaign=socialflow_io9_facebook&utm_source=io9_facebook&utm_medium=socialflow

Financial Management at America’s Billion-Dollar Museums

<http://engagingplaces.net/2014/01/08/financial-management-at-americas-billion-dollar-museums/>

Shift in how some museums are funded

http://www.bostonglobe.com/arts/theater-art/2013/12/28/sanctuary-and-change-boston-area-museum-scene/CUJp1ODEMFEGvSLP69MtDO/story.html?s_campaign=sm_tw